

Feb. 7, 2007

Montana House of Representatives
House Business and Labor Committee

Dear Chairman Mendhall and members of the committee:

We are a group of local clinicians and therapists that work at the Rehabilitation Center at Community Medical Center in Missoula MT. We are writing to urge your support for the House Bill 553 sponsored by Tim Callahan. We have been serving Montana patients for many years providing families and individuals with quality rehabilitation, family focused education and support.

House Bill 553 will ensure that injured workers have the right to choose their ^{own} rehabilitation provider. The right to choose is critical to the well being of the individual. We are knowledgeable about the importance of family involvement in the recovery of individuals suffering from traumatic brain injury as well as other disabilities, which warrant intensive rehabilitation. Insurance companies often choose out of state rehabilitation providers for brain injury. Forcing the injured worker to go out of state causes upheaval in an already stressed family situation and takes business away from Montana providers. Finally we as many in the State are CARF accredited ensuring quality if not superior care.

The injured worker and family should be able to look at the options of Rehabilitation providers and be allowed to make the choice.

Your support of House Bill 553 will:

- Safeguard the rights of injured workers:
- Provide families the opportunity to remain connected to their loved one in the Rehab process
- Support local providers with in Montana
- Support local businesses in the community

Thank you for your support.

Mary Shane, PT
E. Redfern, T.

R. Weller, PT

Margaret Moffatt, PT

Debra Drakos, OTR/L

Brenda Jones, MS, OTR/L

Cindy Bacon-James, CCC/SIP
Christina Cipriano, LCP, NCC
Matt Blum, PT

Please consider this statement of support for HB553.

I am a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor, business owner and a rehabilitation provider working directly with disabled and injured workers in the state of Montana since 1989. The reasons to support this bill, from a provider's view, are:

1. This section of the Workers' Compensation law is concerned with providing the injured or disabled worker a benefit to assist that person in becoming a productive member of our society. This bill would allow the worker to take "ownership" of the process thereby rendering it more successful. Just as the insurance company does not dictate who shall be the medical provider, nor shall they be able to dictate who will be rehabilitation provider. Providing some ownership of this legislated process will lessen alienation of the worker and potentially lessen costly litigation.
2. The rehabilitation process is the only section of the Workers' Compensation law that is concerned with the individual's future. This process is already so narrow and restrictive, that the choice of a rehabilitation provider should not have any affect on the cost of a claim. The rehabilitation providers all must work within the confines of the law to provide the best rehabilitation plan. Why not let the receiver of this benefit choose the provider to help guide his/her future?
3. All rehabilitation providers working with individuals receiving Workers' Compensation benefits are required to be certified by the Commission on Rehabilitation Counselors. This is the body that dictates our professional ethics and standards. Contained in our Professional Code of Ethics are the following:
 - A.1.a. **DEFINITION OF CLIENT.** The primary obligation of rehabilitation counselors will be to their clients, defined as individuals with disabilities...
 - A.3.d. **FREEDOM OF CHOICE.** To the extent possible, rehabilitation counselors will offer clients the freedom to choose whether to enter into a counseling relationship and to determine which professional(s) will provide counseling....
4. Passage of this bill will allow for more autonomous professionalism of the rehabilitation providers.

It is my belief that all players in the rehabilitation process will benefit from this bill. It will allow for more autonomy of services, more satisfied recipients and ultimately less litigation concerning the rehabilitation process. I highly encourage you to support passage of this bill.

Thank you for your time and service.

Karen S. Black, MEd, CRC, CDMS, CCM
President, Vocational Consulting Services, Inc
P.O. Box 1296
Bozeman, MT 59771
(406) 587-4143
kblackvcs@in-tch.com